

EDITORIALS

Generals should stay

It's unfair.

It's poor leadership.

And it's unconscionable that the Air Force continues to allow generals to retire while 11,500 airmen and officers are forced by stop-loss to stay put.

The Air Force provides a stack of policies and procedures to explain away this double standard. But while generals may be allowed to retire, that doesn't make it right.

Or, practical. Why are generals — arguably the most qualified and experienced members of the team — allowed to retire when you need them most?

That seems to have been the Air Force's own argument when it quickly found a way to keep chief master sergeants in uniform. By law, no more than 1 percent of the enlisted force can be E-9s. But Air Force leaders in early October granted a waiver that would keep chiefs on active duty without slowing pending promotions of senior master sergeants.

It was a smart move. It would have been smarter to include general officers in that waiver.

The Air Force counters that there are a finite number of jobs for generals, so there's no place to put them. But it's hard to believe that a hand-

ful of people with three decades of experience can't be of use somewhere.

Officials have had no problems finding meaningful employment for 11,500 airmen. Those individuals promised their service and kept their word, yet are forced to have their lives and futures disrupted while their generals walk into the open arms of the civilian workforce.

Many of these 11,500 airmen no doubt are eager to stay in the fight and do their part. Still, it must be demoralizing to see senior leadership allowed — and willing — to leave.

After expressing their sympathies, Air Force leaders are quick to express their support for stop-loss.

And they're right — using the reserves to fill the void left by departing active-duty airmen is unfair and impractical. And with the Air Guard and Air Reserve providing more than half of the reserve's 56,450 activations, this stop-loss order may prove a very necessary evil to keep the status quo.

But actions speak louder than words.

Generals should not be allowed to separate when their troops are forced to stay — nor should they choose to.